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A RAND NOTE

Corps and Division Command Staff Turnover
in the 1980s

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October 1989

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This Note presents the results of a survey of all active component U.S. Army corps and division headquarters requesting the names and times of service of their commanders, deputy commanders, chiefs of staff, and assistant chiefs of staff during the 1980s. It examines command staff turnover with respect to two contrasting models of team composition. The first model, a "unit team" one, assumes that a team is constructed from scratch and stays together over a period of time. The second model, a "steady state" one, assumes that the staff is a continuous social entity that people enter and leave at regular intervals. Analysis of turbulence data showed that the steady-state model is far more descriptive of current corps and division staffs than the unit composition model. The findings suggest that (1) team-building training should emphasize the rapid socialization of new staff members as a constant task for a unit, and (2) exercises should be designed to test and reinforce the mutual understanding among staff members as well as the performance of standard operating procedures. The Army may wish to consider whether it should implement a division and corps command staff assignment procedure that would result in more stable, cohesive teams.

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PREFACE

This Note presents the results of work performed for a project entitled "Higher-Echelon Command and Control--Improving General Staff Functioning." The project lies within the Manpower, Training, and Performance Program of the Arroyo Center and is sponsored by the Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA), U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). The Note gives the results of a query sent to all active component U.S. Army corps and division headquarters requesting the names and times of service of their commanders, deputy commanders, chiefs of staff, and assistant chiefs of staff during the 1980s. The documentation should be of interest to persons interested in higher-echelon command post turbulence, staff rotation policies, and scheduling the training of divisions and corps.

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SUMMARY

The Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) is a new U.S. Army program that aims to train each corps and division every two years. A BCTP "cycle" consists of a week-long Battle Seminar at Fort Leavenworth, a command post exercise (called the WarFighter Exercise) in the field three to nine months later, and an at-garrison Sustainment Exercise four to six months after the WarFighter. To help guide the BCTP's scheduling policy and to help it fulfill the team-building part of its training mission, information was collected on U.S. Army active component corps and division command staff tours of duty. A request for tour of duty information for commanders, deputy commanders, chiefs of staff, and assistant chiefs of staff during the 1980s was mailed to each corps and division. Usable responses were obtained from four of the five corps and from 12 of the 18 divisions.

LENGTH OF TOUR OF DUTY

The distribution and statistics on length of tour of duty for the commander and staff were analyzed separately for corps and divisions. Table S.1 shows the median tour of duty. Whereas commanders tend to serve the full traditional two-year tour, other command staff serve shorter terms.

Table S.1
MEDIAN LENGTH OF TOUR OF DUTY
(In months)

Unit	Commander	Deputy	CoS	G2+G3	G1+G4+G5
Corps	27.5	21.5	17	17	17
Division	23	16	15.5	17	14

The results show that, if the commanding general's tour of duty is taken as the major consideration, it is possible for the BCTP to plan its training activities around the corps and division cycle of command. By "batch" scheduling of battle seminars in the fall and training reserve units in the summer, the BCTP can conduct the bulk of its WarFighter Exercises within nine months of a command changeover. Considerations other than tour of duty, such as the scheduling of field exercises at other Combat Training Centers and activity requiring the participation of parent higher echelons, can affect the

ability to implement a training schedule. But if the BCTP cycle comes to be regarded as one of the most important training activities for a division or corps, then a flexible, responsive scheduling can be adopted.

COMMAND STAFF COHESIVENESS

Command staff changeover was examined with respect to two contrasting models of team composition. The first model, a "unit team" one, assumes that a team is constructed from scratch and stays together over a period of time. The team is built in an intensive start-up period and remains a cohesive entity until its dissolution. This model was followed by the majority of units in World War II. The second model, a "steady-state" one, assumes that the staff is a continuous social entity, with people entering and leaving at regular intervals. Entering individuals are socialized to the team by the members already present. Analysis of turbulence data showed that the steady-state model was far more descriptive of current corps and division staffs than the unit composition model. Moreover, staff turnover was highly volatile; in almost half of the cases, a team would be intact less than a month before a change was made. Despite that volatility, however, there was room for the development of one-on-one command/staff relationships; two-thirds of the commanders' tenure overlapped with that of a single person within each major staff slot (deputy commanders, chiefs of staff, and assistant chiefs of staff). The consequence of this finding for the BCTP is that its team-building training should emphasize the rapid socialization of new staff members as a constant task for a unit. Exercises should be designed to test and reinforce the mutual understanding among staff members as well as the performance of standard operating procedures. Seminars should discuss the importance of steady-state team-building, for example, by discussing the different roles of novitiate, experienced team member, and senior repository of collective memory.

This study suggests that the Army may wish to consider whether it should implement a division and corps command staff assignment procedure that would result in more stable, cohesive teams. Two changes recommended are increasing the percentage of commanders with prior experience in the units they command and making a greater effort to compose unit teams (e.g., Commander, Chief of Staff, and G3) who serve simultaneous tours of duty.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank the staff of the four U.S. Army corps and 14 U.S. Army divisions who responded to our query by preparing and sending information that was sometimes not immediately available. Rose Marie Vigil contributed to the study by following up on the original query for information with telephone calls and by keeping track of who had responded. Lieutenant General Leonard Wishart, Colonel Wesley Clark, and Captain Robert Fix graciously provided valuable discussions regarding the topic of this Note. At RAND, Ms. Suzanne Holroyd, Major Charles McKenzie, and Dr. John Winkler provided constructive critiques of earlier drafts of the manuscript.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
SUMMARY	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
FIGURES	xi
TABLES	xi
Section	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Objectives	3
Method	3
II. RESULTS	5
Length of Tours of Duty	5
Command Staff Cohesiveness	9
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	14
The Command Cycle and Training Cycles	14
Toward Team-Building	15
Beyond the BCTP	17

FIGURES

1. Commanding General Tour of Duty	5
2. Deputy Commander Tour of Duty	6
3. Chief of Staff Tour of Duty	7
4. G2 and G3 Tours of Duty	8
5. G1, G4, and G5 Tours of Duty	9
6. Command Staff Turbulence	10

TABLES

S.1. Median Length of Tour of Duty	v
1. Staff Experience at Commanding General Changeover	11
2. Longest Commander/Staff Common Tour Length, by Commander ...	12
3. Commanders' Previous Experience with Unit	13

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) was started by the U.S. Army in late 1987 to train corps and division command staffs. The objectives of the BCTP are to refresh and update the unit being trained on doctrine, to help it develop warfighting planning and execution skills, and to help its team-building process. As envisioned by its designers, the BCTP would work with each corps and division on a biannual cycle, corresponding to the cycle of commanding generals.¹ The first phase of the BCTP, a week-long seminar conducted at Fort Leavenworth, would take place soon after a new commander assumed his position, whereas the second phase, a week-long command-post exercise called the WarFighter Exercise (WFX), would take place from three to nine months later. A third sustainment exercise phase² tests the BCTP lessons learned from four to six months after the WFX.

The Command Cycle

The linkage of the BCTP cycle to the cycle of command is more than an attempt at administrative convenience. Historical battlefield experience³ and current U.S. Army officer training and education⁴ point to the centrality of the commander and the need for a cohesive command post team if the command-and-control battlefield operating system is to function at a satisfactory level.

The intended scheduling of BCTP cycles has, however, proved difficult to implement. Of the first three divisions to cycle through the BCTP, one incurred a change of command within six months of the WFX and another changed its commander and half of the command post staff in the four months between the seminar phase and the WFX. Two later BCTP cycles completed in February and May 1989 involved divisions scheduled for changes of command in the summer of 1989. Currently, the BCTP is scheduling corps and divisions up to two calendar years in advance; given this lead time,

¹Battle Command Training Program, *BCTP External Operating Procedures*, Combined Arms Training Activity, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 22 December 1988.

²This phase will begin in late 1989.

³See, e.g., C. E. Heller and W. A. Stofft, *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 1986.

⁴See, e.g., J. P. Kahan, D. R. Worley, and C. Stasz, *Understanding Commanders' Information Needs*, The RAND Corporation, R-3761-A, 1989.

it is a safe bet that many units will not participate at the intended time in the command cycle.

Team-Building

Although the BCTP has, in its first two years, developed tools to achieve its doctrinal and readiness objectives,⁵ the team-building goal has not been explicitly addressed. In part, this has been because the experience of divisions in the BCTP has not provided a good barometer of what team-building needs are. Some divisions appear to be firmly cohesive while others seem in need of considerable assistance. Informal observations at BCTP events indicate that the experience a unit had working together and the familiarity of the command officers with the overall orientation and mission of the unit influenced the degree of team cohesiveness.⁶

If all command post staff served two-year tours, there could still be a wide variation in the time a command team worked together. On the one hand, all the officers could assume their jobs at once (the "unit team" model). The team would be formed in an intensive start-up period and would remain a cohesive entity until its dissolution. A team formed according to this model would have a rocky beginning but a smoothly functioning and efficient organization later in the cycle. On the other hand, officers could come in at regular intervals (the "steady-state" model). A team would be a continuous social body, with individuals entering and leaving but the group always remaining essentially intact. The team would have a fairly constant state of less-than-optimal but good performance, with older hands constantly "socializing" a small group of newcomers. Historically, the unit team command model has held in wartime;⁷ many generals (e.g., MacArthur and Patton) took the same selected subordinates with them as they repeatedly changed commands. It is not clear whether there is an explicit policy at present; apparent variation from unit to unit means that there is no immediately obvious implicit policy.

⁵See in this regard W. H. Harrison and L. Saunders, "Fighting the First Battle Now," *Military Review*, Vol. 68, No. 10, October 1988, pp. 12-19; M. F. Spigelmire and H. S. Tuttle, "BCTP and the Victory Division," *Military Review*, Vol. 68, No. 10, October 1988, pp. 20-26.

⁶See J. P. Kahan, D. R. Worley, S. M. Holroyd, L. C. Pleger, and C. Stasz, *Implementing the Battle Command Training Program*, The RAND Corporation, R-3816-A, forthcoming in 1989, for a detailed assessment of the early performance of the BCTP.

⁷See, e.g., G. Wade, *World War II Division Commanders*, Combat Studies Institute, CSI Report No 7, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, no date.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the analyses in this Note are to (1) determine whether the actual turnover among corps and division commanders and command staff could serve as the basis for a BCTP scheduling policy and to (2) examine the relationship between commander tours of duty and command staff tours of duty to help frame the team-building tasks of the BCTP. The analyses form the basis for recommendations regarding BCTP scheduling, team-building, and Army command staff rotation policies.

Unfortunately, the BCTP did not have immediately available relevant information on corps and division command cycles; moreover, preliminary inquiry indicated that obtaining this information from any central Army source such as the Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM)⁸ would be difficult at best. Therefore, information was requested directly from the historian of each corps and division.

METHOD

A letter was mailed to the historian of each of the five U.S. Army active component corps and 18 divisions requesting the names of the individuals and their terms of service (to the nearest month) of the Commanding General (CG), Deputy Commanding General (DCG),⁹ Chief of Staff (CoS), and Assistant Chiefs of Staff for Personnel (G1), Intelligence (G2), Operations (G3), Logistics (G4), and Civilian Affairs (G5) between January 1980 and January 1989.¹⁰ The letters were followed up by telephone calls at roughly monthly intervals until April 1989.¹¹

Responses were obtained from four of the five corps and from 12 of the 16 eligible divisions.¹² Of the responding units, complete records were obtained from three of the four corps but from only four of the 12 divisions. Data analyses, which combined information across corps and across divisions, were not adjusted

⁸Until recently called the Total Army Personnel Agency (TAPA) and before that the Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN).

⁹For divisions, Assistant Division Commander (ADC).

¹⁰In the analyses below, the assistant chiefs are combined into combat (G2+G3) and combat service support (G1+G4+G5) categories.

¹¹The 10th Infantry Division (Mountain) and 6th Infantry Division (Light) responded by telephone that they had not been formed until the mid-1980s. These two units were therefore excluded from the study.

¹²Geography decidedly influenced the response rate. 100 percent of corps and divisions stationed in the contiguous United States (CONUS) provided responses. One of two corps and two of six divisions based outside of CONUS responded. There is no evidence, however, that Army staffing policy for United States-based units differs from that for overseas units.

for the missing information; thus, there is a potential but unknown bias if staff turnover in the nonresponding or incompletely responding units is different from that of the complete respondents. There is, however, no a priori reason to believe that the compilation provided below does not represent division and corps staff turnover during the years 1981-1988.

Information not available from unit records was supplemented by reference to the Army Executive Biographies of general officers for 1986.¹³ Some other information was obtained from personal interviews with serving and retired general officers and from the personal knowledge the author gained by observing BCTP activities.

Although data were obtained for 1980, that year was not included in the analyses because data were more sketchy for that year and because one division and one corps were not formed until 1981. We did, however, use the 1980 data to provide information about the length of service for commanders and staff already serving in 1981.

¹³Department of the Army, *Army Executive Biographies*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, Pamphlet 360-10, February 1986.

II. RESULTS

Two sets of analyses are presented in this section. The first set looks at the length of tour of duty for the commander and command staff of corps and divisions. The second set looks at the relationships among tours of duty in order to examine staff cohesiveness.

LENGTH OF TOURS OF DUTY

Figure 1 shows the percentages of duration of tours of duty for corps and division commanders from 1981 to 1989, based on data from 14 corps and 50 division commanders.¹⁴ Nearly half of the division commanders served a two-year term; about one-fifth of the commanders served a longer term and about one-third served a shorter term. Over 80 percent of division commanders served at least eighteen months. Corps commanders served even longer terms than division commanders. Although the modal tour of duty for corps commanders was two years, fewer than half served two years or less while over one-third served more than two and a half years.

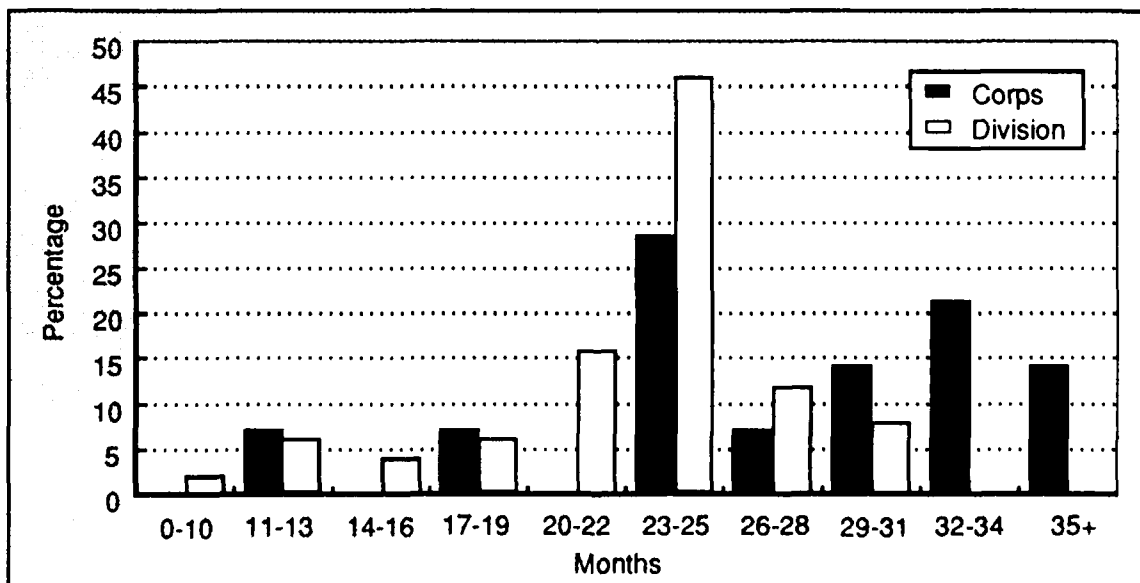


Fig. 1—Commanding general tour of duty

¹⁴We could not of course analyze the length of tour of duty of currently serving commanders.

To minimize disruption to families, most Army changes of duty take place in the summer months, from mid-June through mid-September. The changes of command we examined were not exceptional in this regard. Of the 17 corps commanders for whom we have data, 11 took command in summer. The corresponding number for divisions is 44 of 60 commanders. Half of the changes of command took place in odd-numbered years and half in even-numbered years.

Figures 2 through 5 present the turnover incidence for command staff officers. Figure 2 provides the information for corps DCGs (major generals) and division ADCs (mostly brigadier generals with a few colonels), Fig. 3 for CoSs (brigadier generals for corps and colonels for divisions), Fig. 4 for the combat-oriented G2 and G3 assistant chiefs (colonels for corps and lieutenant colonels for divisions), and Fig. 5 for the combat service support-oriented G1, G4, and G5 assistant chiefs.

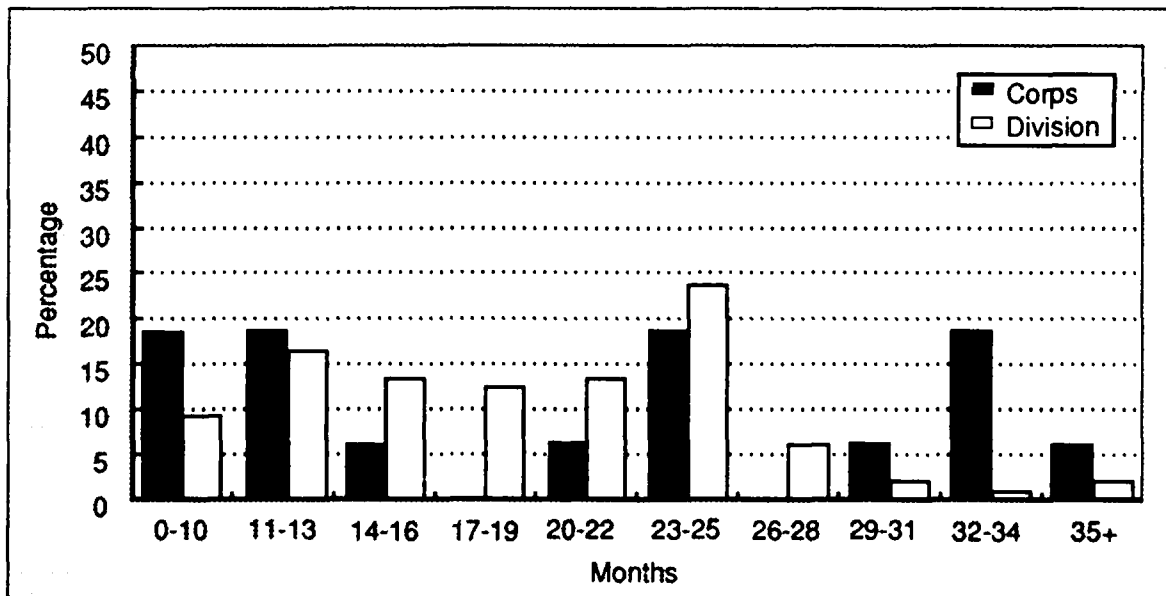


Fig. 2—Deputy commander tour of duty

Figure 2, based on records of 16 DCGs and 92 ADCs, shows that the two-year or more tour of duty maintained for commanders does not hold for their principal deputies. The distribution of the length of tour of duty for the ADCs is largely flat across the range of one year to two years. The median term of service is about 18 months, with fewer than one-third serving two or more years. Indeed, about one-quarter of ADCs serve one year

or less. For deputy corps commanders, the range of tour of duty is remarkably widespread; one third of DCGs serve about a year or less whereas more than one quarter serve 30 months or more. The mode is at two years and the median is 22 months, but the distribution is weighted toward shorter tours.

Figure 3 shows the tours of duty for CoSs, based on 21 corps and 59 division chiefs. These tours are much shorter than those of the commanders. As with the deputy commanders, there is a significant incidence of short tours of duty (about a year or less); these are, however, no longer balanced by longer tours of duty. The traditional two-year term is achieved by fewer than one quarter of all chiefs. The median tour of duty was in the 17-19 month category for both division and corps chiefs. Based on these data, we can anticipate that a typical corps or division commander will have two or three chiefs during his period of command.

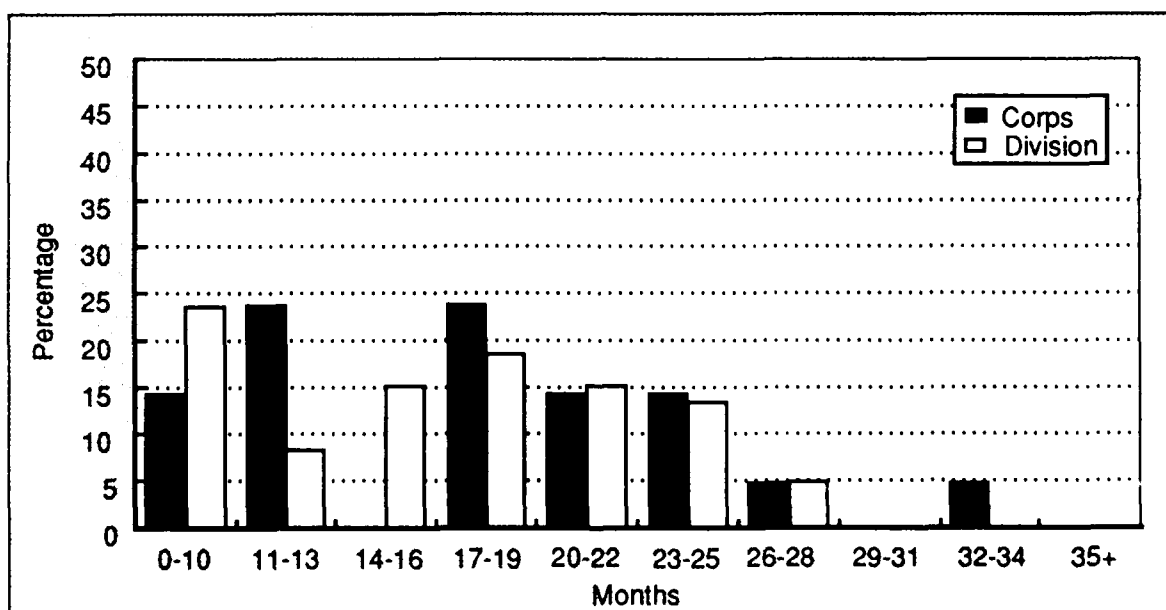


Fig. 3—Chief of Staff tour of duty

Figure 4 portrays information for 95 division and 35 corps G2 and G3 assistant chiefs. The two positions are closely allied in command post organization, and the two officers work together on combat operations planning. The G1, G4, and G5, by contrast, are oriented toward combat service support.

For both corps and divisions, the G2s and G3s appear to have longer tours of duty than the CoSs; the variation in length of tour is markedly greater than that of commanders' tours. For divisions, there were two marked peaks around one year and two years of service; the median was at one and a half years. The center of mass of the distribution is at the lower end of the term of service; while one-third of G2s and G3s served a year or less, only one-sixth served more than two years. Corps officers showed no peak term of service; the distribution is relatively flat across the entire range of service. The median for corps G2s and G3s is 18 months.

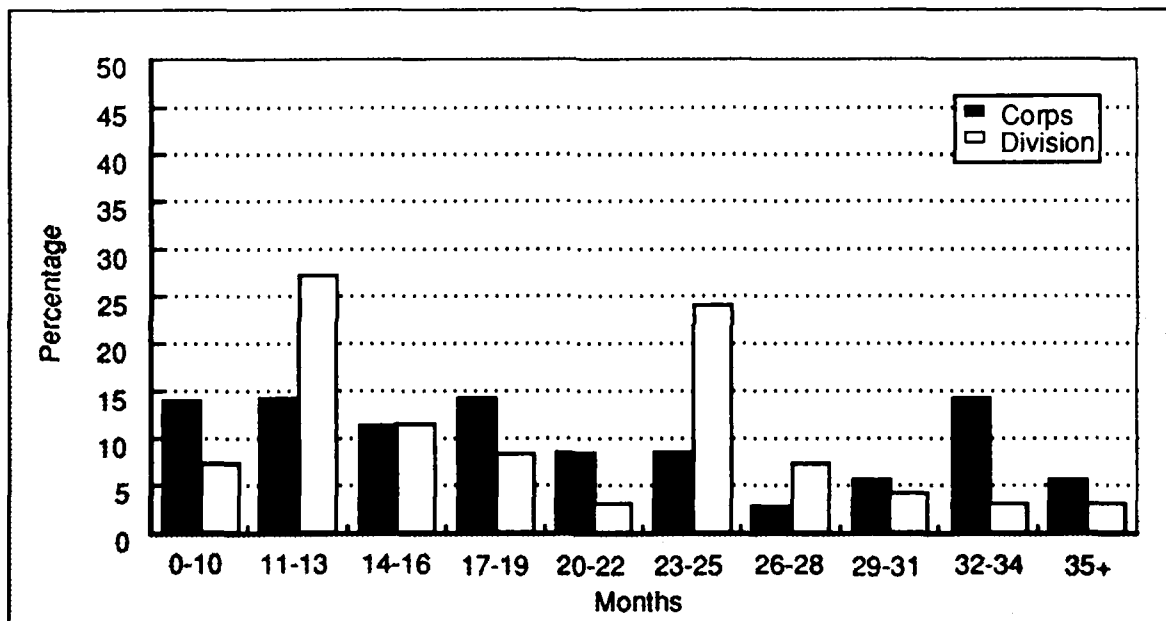


Fig. 4 —G2 and G3 tours of duty

Finally, Fig. 5 combines information for 151 division and 58 corps G1, G4, and G5 assistant chiefs. For these officers, the short term of 13 months or less is most prevalent; almost half of all division staffers and over one third of corps officers were short-termers. For corps but not for divisions, this is offset by a few officers with tours longer than two years; one G5 served for over five years. The median for corps was 18 months, whereas that for divisions was 14 months. The traditional two-year tour is met by fewer than one officer in five. The picture for combat service support staff members is thus one of great uncertainty and high turnover.

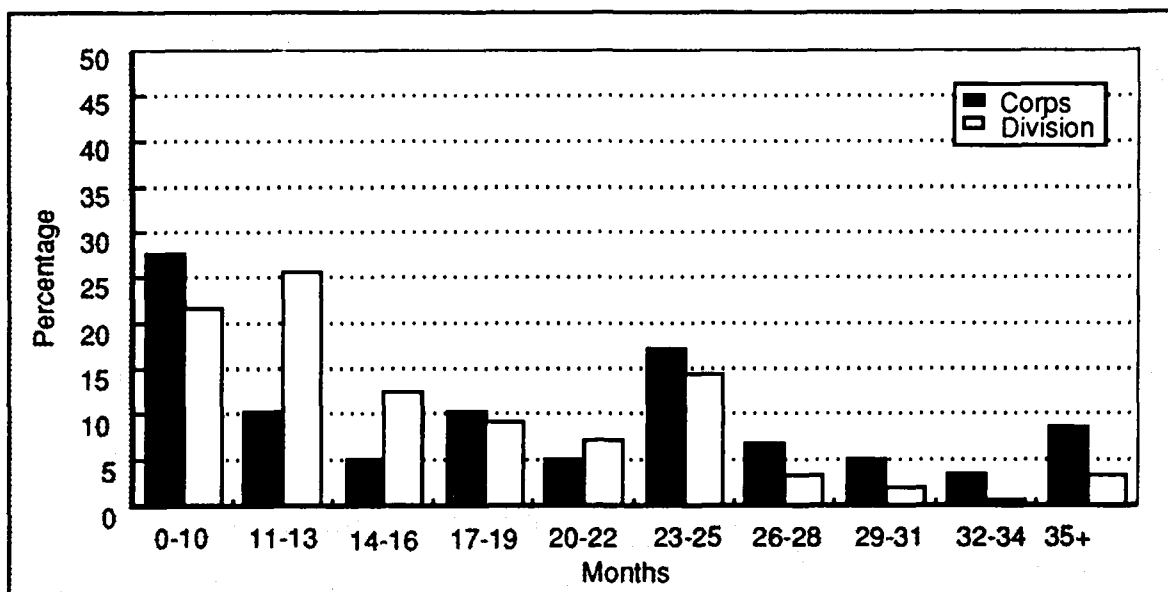


Fig. 5—G1, G4, and G5 tours of duty

To summarize, the median tour of duty for all of the principal division and corps general staff officers except the commanding general falls short of the traditional two years. Although the available data do not provide a reason for this phenomenon, common experience suggests that general staff members, typically the better officers within a cohort, are in demand for other jobs with more command responsibility. Consistent with this explanation is the slight peak of turnover around one year of service for assistant chiefs of staff (G1-G5), when battalion and brigade command vacancies occur. In such instances, the comparative advantage for the individual officer certainly lies in the transfer; even Army-wide, the loss to the originating unit in team cohesion may be compensated for by the gain in leadership talent by the receiving unit.

COMMAND STAFF COHESIVENESS

Even with the relatively short tours of duty of command staff officers, command post cohesiveness could be maintained if staffs have experience working together. We present here analyses indicative of the ability of divisions and corps to build this cohesiveness. Our measure of cohesiveness in these analyses is the amount of time the staff spends together as a team. Although it is true that there are many other factors that enter into the cohesiveness of a team,¹⁵ the longer the time the team is together, the better its members know both the good and bad characteristics of each other. Thus, time

¹⁵See J. P. Kahan, N. M. Webb, R. J. Shavelson, and R. M. Stolzenberg, *Individual Characteristics and Unit Performance: A Review of Research and Methods*, The RAND Corporation, R-3194-MIL, November 1984, for a discussion of the effect of cohesiveness on team performance.

together may not be an outstanding predictor of cohesiveness when comparing different teams, but generally, the longer any particular team is together, the more cohesive it is.

Figure 6 shows the number of months between a change in the command staff composition. Such a change was recorded upon either (1) a change of command staff personnel or (2) the creation or filling of a command staff vacancy of one or more months' duration.¹⁶ The data in the figure are based on 108 corps and 221 division changes in command staff personnel.

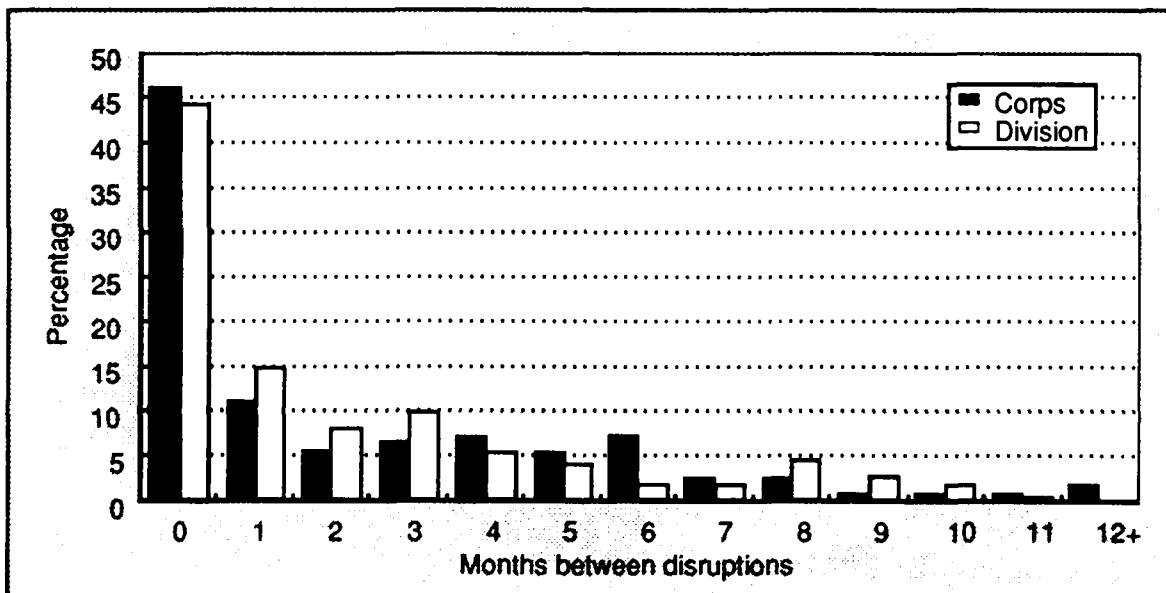


Fig. 6—Command staff turbulence

Figure 6 shows that the peacetime Army of the 1980s reflects the steady-state model more than it does the unit team model; commanders have little control over the tenure of their subordinates. The mean time between changes in the command staff personnel composition was 2.4 months for corps and 2.1 months for divisions; the median for both was one month. Only 10 percent of corps changes and 13 percent of division changes were preceded by six months or more of stability. Over half of the time, there was only one month or less between staff personnel changes.

¹⁶It might be argued that we are double-counting for creating and filling vacancies. However, there is never a true vacuum in a staff position; when the position is vacant, the senior assistant occupies the role, and this person's entrance or exit is reasonably labeled as a change of personnel.

Despite the rapid turnover within the staff, command transitions can be made easier if the new commander has a relatively experienced staff to draw upon as he rebuilds the command team to respond to his image of the battlefield. Table 1 presents summary statistics for the experience of the deputy commanders, CoSs, and assistant chiefs of staff for 15 corps and 48 division new commanders assuming command between January 1981 and December 1988.

Table 1
STAFF EXPERIENCE AT COMMANDING GENERAL CHANGEOVER
(In months)

Unit	Statistic	Deputy Commander	CoS	G2+G3	G1+G4+G5
Corps	n	15	15	28	43
	mean	6.5	8.5	11.2	11.0
	std. dev.	7.5	7.2	10.1	10.9
	median	4	7	11	10
Division	n	86 ¹⁷	46	86	115
	mean	10.2	7.9	9.5	9.2
	std. dev.	7.8	6.8	7.0	9.6
	median	10.5	6.5	10.5	9

Table 1 shows that division assistant chiefs (G1-G5) had been on the job for about nine months, whereas corps assistant chiefs served 11 months on average. However, the large standard deviations indicate that there was considerable variation around those averages. Corps and division CoSs served about two-thirds of a year, again with considerable variation. Corps DCGs served the shortest time of all--over half for four months or less--while division ADCs had been in place longer than any other division command staffer. Although these data indicate that the commander can, *on average*, expect to be able to draw upon some experience from his staff, there is so much variation that planning on staff experience to assist the commander is a poor strategy. Unfortunately, given the short tours of duty characteristic of assistant chiefs of staff, these

¹⁷Most divisions have two ADCs, one for maneuver and one for support. The two deputy commander roles are combined for this analysis.

data also suggest that the commander can anticipate turnover shortly after assuming the job. The relatively low average time in position of the CoS and the DCG should not be necessarily regarded as disruptive, but could instead reflect some commanders bringing in new individuals of their own choosing for those positions.

Even though there may be a fairly constant turnover of personnel, commanders may have the opportunity to work for extensive periods of time with individual officers. To look at this possibility, we examined for each commander and each command staff position the longest period of common service. For example, if a commander served 24 months and had three G4s, one of whom served a year beginning six months before the commander, one of whom served 11 months entirely during the commander's tenure, and one of whom served three years, of which the first seven months were with the commander, then the middle G4 had the longest common service time, and 11 months was entered for that commander/G4 pair.

Table 2

LONGEST COMMANDER/STAFF COMMON TOUR LENGTH, BY COMMANDER
(In months)

Unit	Statistic	Deputy Commander	CoS	G2+G3	G1+G4+G5
Corps	n	14	14	26	40
	mean	16.4	17.1	18.0	17.3
	% of commander's tenure	61.5	63.9	67.2	64.7
	std. dev.	6.1	5.0	7.3	5.7
Division	n	42	78	103	
	mean	14.5	15.1	14.3	13.6
	% of commander's tenure	67.4	70.1	66.9	63.4
	std. dev.	4.9	4.4	4.7	4.9

Table 2 shows, given the wide variation in tour of duty demonstrated earlier, a remarkable consistency. A commander is likely to have the same subordinate in each of his major assistant positions between 60 and 70 percent of the time he holds command. (The slightly lower percentages for corps staff, even given the slightly higher number of

months, is due to the longer mean commander's tour of duty, 26.7 months for corps commanders vs. 21.4 months for division commanders.) The picture therefore emerges of stable (longer than a year) relationships interspersed with unpredictable rapid changeovers of personnel.

As a final look at team cohesiveness, we look at the personal histories of the commanding generals. If a commander is familiar with a unit, the time required for him to become familiar with the unit, its missions, and its staff is shortened. For example, if a division commander succeeds to that position directly from an ADC job in the same division, his familiarity with the staff can shorten team-building time considerably. On the other hand, if a commander's first tour with a unit is at its head, team-building may be a laborious process. Table 3 shows whether the commander had previous experience as a command staff member (deputy commander, CoS, or assistant chief of staff) or as a subordinate commander (brigade commander for divisions, division commander for corps) before taking command. The percentages shown in Table 3 are not suggestive of any implicit American regimental system. Given that a corps commander typically held two to three jobs that could have qualified as previous experience within the corps, the 50 percent previous experience figure is close to what one might expect given a random assignment. The 42 percent figure for division commanders, while less than half, is more indicative of taking into account previous experience, as a random assignment among 18 divisions, even for several jobs, would still result in matches about 15 percent of the time.¹⁸

Table 3

COMMANDERS' PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH UNIT

Commander	Yes	No	Total
Corps	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	14
Division	21 (42%)	30 (58%)	51

¹⁸For a single previous experience, the random chance of getting a new job in the same corps as a previous job is 1 out of 5 corps, or 20 percent. For divisions, the likelihood is 1 out of 18, or about 6 percent. Whereas the calculations for a match given two or three previous jobs, which may or may not be within the same unit, are more complicated, the figures of 50 percent and 15 percent for corps and divisions, respectively, are close enough to make the point.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMAND CYCLE AND TRAINING CYCLES

The information in Figs. 1 through 5 shows that the traditional Army two-year tour of duty applies only to division commanders. Corps commanders serve slightly longer tours, whereas command staff officers at both division and corps serve, on the average, shorter tours. At the Chief of Staff level and below, there is considerable variation in the length of tour of duty, with many officers serving one year or less in post. These data serve to reinforce the conventional wisdom of keying division and corps training activities to the commanding general; not only is he the responsible authority for decisions, but his position appears to be the most stable point in the cycle of command post turnover.

The question of whether the BCTP could arrange its training activities around the corps and division cycle of command seems to be answerable in the affirmative. Experience shows that there will be approximately ten division and two to three corps changes of command within any one year. The occasional short tour of duty for a commander amounts to about one extra BCTP cycle¹⁹ per year. The BCTP has two Mobile Training Teams (MTTs), each of which conducts eight cycles per year, although both teams must participate in corps WFXs. Thus, in a two-year period, the 32 MTT slots available to the BCTP are more than the estimated 30 needed for active component corps and divisions.²⁰ Open slots can be filled by reserve component divisions, but not on the same two-year cycle.

A small problem is created by the weight of changeover in the summer months if the BCTP attempts to have all WFXs at exactly the same time in the commander's tour of duty. But this problem can be overcome by "batch" scheduling seminar weeks in the fall. The seminars are more set-pieces than the WFXs and do not require extensive lead preparation time. The WFXs can be spread out over the winter and spring months and still meet the 4 to 6 month post-Battle Seminar window. Summer can be used to run reserve units and for program development time.

¹⁹A BCTP cycle is the Battle Seminar, the WarFighter Exercise, and the Sustainment Exercise. From 7 to 12 months of calendar time is needed to complete a cycle.

²⁰The picture is actually slightly better than this. Although both MTTs participate in corps WFXs, only the primary MTT conducts the Battle Seminar. Thus, five additional Battle Seminar preparation and participation slots are available every two years.

There is a loss for the reserve component divisions in this planning. But reserve divisions do not have the command staff turbulence of active component divisions and perhaps do not need the frequent revisit of the BCTP. Moreover, as was done at a recent corps-level WFX, reserve divisions can participate in a WFX-within-a-WFX conducted by the secondary MTT at corps exercises.

What is necessary to implement keying the BCTP to the command cycle is flexibility in scheduling. As the BCTP becomes more established within the Army, the extensive negotiations about when the cycle will occur, about exactly how and where the WFX will be conducted, and about which databases will need to be created can be abbreviated. The BCTP should maintain as fluid a schedule as possible, scheduling units as changes of command are announced and changing its schedule (whenever possible) if sudden changes of command occur.

It could be argued that the complicated exercise schedule of higher echelons requires a long lead time for BCTP activities, and that the BCTP must join in at the end of the queue to get its turn. The counterargument is that the BCTP can be a focal point in the redesign of exercise schedules to achieve the agility that exercises are alleged to test. Even more to the point, if an exercise is to test the readiness to react quickly to military crises, it is almost paradoxical to require great amounts of lead time to stage the exercise. If the peacetime business of divisions and corps gets in the way of exercising command and control, then that business is likely to also get in the way of executing battlefield command and control.

TOWARD TEAM-BUILDING

On the whole, current staffing policy for corps and division command staffs is more representative of the steady-state model than the wartime unit team model. There is a rapid turnover of personnel; almost half of the time a team will be intact less than a month before a change occurs. But even in a steady-state model, a commander can anticipate establishing long-term (relative to his two-year tour of duty) relationships with some people on his staff.

The problem for team-building lies in the inability to anticipate turnover of the staff. Given the relatively short median tour of duty for command staff and the high variability in length of tour of duty, there is no firm basis for knowing which staff members in place at a change of command will stay to be long-term assistants. For example, a G3 in place for a year at a change of command may serve a second year with the new commander, but he is just as likely to be replaced with somebody else who will

become the commander's operations mainstay. Each staff position appears to be similarly and independently variable. Although the lead time before a change of position (typically three to six months) helps the unit prepare for any particular change, the seemingly haphazard overall turnover makes planning for a stable team difficult. Also, because of the relatively high rank (and therefore scarcity) of general staff officers, there is no opportunity for old and new staffers to overlap while the newcomer adapts to the team. It thus becomes poor policy to anticipate a stable team; instead, the investment must be in continuously refreshing and retraining the staff to work as a cohesive unit.

For the BCTP, the most important implication of these results is that turnover will be a fact of life for the command staffs it trains; therefore, team-building training should emphasize the socialization of new staff members as a constant task. The BCTP can provide this training in several ways. For one, the battle seminar workshop on team-building can emphasize the need for using multiple feedback procedures to ensure a common understanding by a staff who may be unfamiliar with each others' ways of working. Techniques such as backbriefing²¹ or end-point-to-end-point communication tracking²² can be presented and their importance emphasized by example. Another way to assist team-building is for seminars to explicitly address the roles of novitiate, full participant, and senior repository of collective knowledge that each command staff member assumes during his tour of duty.

In the decision exercises conducted during the seminar, success or failure of the unit can be measured by the understanding displayed by the command staff. This can be accomplished by having exercise observer/controllers trace selected important information through the command staff. Then, each command staffer's independent belief in the content of the communication can be set alongside the observer/controllers' records of communications to trace the origins of misunderstandings. If the BCTP obtains in advance the length of time each staff member has been with the training unit, it can point observer/controllers to possible "weak links" in the team communication chain.

²¹Backbriefing is an immediate response by the recipient of a communication restating the communication for the sender. It is a way of making sure that the sender and recipient agree on the content of the message.

²²End-point-to-end-point communication tracking means that messages are not considered delivered until the named addressee acknowledges receipt. This prevents pigeonholing and other transmission errors.

BEYOND THE BCTP

The information presented here is perhaps useful beyond the planning horizons of the BCTP. The Army may wish to consider whether it should implement a division and corps command staff assignment procedure that would result in more stable, cohesive teams. Several small changes might help in this regard.

First, only half of the corps and division commanders had prior service in their new commands, even though that experience has been proven valuable by commanders who have it. The extreme of requiring prior unit service by commanders is probably not a good idea. For one thing, it would discourage quality officers who happen to serve with a "star" because their command slot would be spoken for. But perhaps more effort could be made to adjust assignments to improve the percentage of matches.

Second, the Army might entertain creating some unit teams. The commander, CoS and G3 work so closely together, for example, that it might be worthwhile to make their tours of duty coincide. Having deputy commanders and the G1 and G4 rotations linked but one year offset from the commander pair would maintain institutional continuity while promoting cohesiveness between those officers.

Finally, there is a need to systematically examine the effect of rotation policy on command post effectiveness. This study showed that not only are there no data that address this issue, but that simple rotation statistics are often unavailable. As the BCTP and other Combat Training Centers make available data on the performance effectiveness of units, rotation policies can be examined to see how they affect that performance.